

Introduced by Senator Monning

February 19, 2016

An act to add Sections 35630 and 35631 to the Public Resources Code, relating to coastal resources.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 1363, as introduced, Monning. Coastal resources: eelgrass habitat.

Existing law establishes the Ocean Protection Council and requires the council, among other things, to coordinate activities of state agencies that are related to the protection and conservation of coastal waters and ocean ecosystems, and to establish policies to coordinate the collection and sharing of scientific data related to coastal and ocean resources among agencies.

This bill would state the intent of the Legislature to enact legislation to promote restoration of eelgrass habitat in California's coastal environments, bays, and estuaries, based on scientific- and evidence-based approaches.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: no.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

- 1 SECTION 1. Section 35630 is added to the Public Resources
- 2 Code, to read:
- 3 35630. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:
- 4 (a) Eelgrass ecosystems are among the most diverse and
- 5 productive ecosystems in the world, with particular importance to
- 6 commercially and recreationally valuable species like shellfish,
- 7 crabs, finfish, waterfowl, and migratory birds.

1 (b) Since the 1850s, 90 percent of California's eelgrass acreage
2 has been destroyed, and the remaining 10 percent is continuously
3 exposed to multiple stressors and threats.

4 (c) Scientific research has shown that eelgrass habitat provides
5 multiple benefits including the following:

6 (1) Providing essential fish habitat for recovering salmon
7 populations and supporting commercial fisheries important to
8 California's coastal economy.

9 (2) Improving water clarity by filtering polluted runoff and by
10 absorbing excess nutrients.

11 (3) Helping to mitigate hypoxia, an abnormal deficiency of
12 oxygen in marine environments.

13 (4) Sequestering carbon in the underlying sediments.

14 (5) Protecting the shoreline from erosion by absorbing wave
15 energy and helping to mitigate sea level rise.

16 SEC. 2. Section 35631 is added to the Public Resources Code,
17 to read:

18 35631. It is the intent of the Legislature to enact legislation to
19 promote restoration of eelgrass habitat in California's coastal
20 environments, bays, and estuaries, based on scientific- and
21 evidence-based approaches.